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**My Soul, O Lord, my soul  
doth weep for Thee,**

## Father Seraphim Rose: A Quarter Century Later

On September 2nd, 2007 - the twenty-fifth anniversary of the repose of Father Seraphim Rose - our family had the unique opportunity to be present at the St. Herman Brotherhood in Platina California, to join other faithful in prayers for the soul of Father Seraphim, and to ask his prayers for the Church in our times.

It was an uncommon blessing for me to stand before the grave of Father Seraphim and serve the Divine Liturgy, on the very ground where this contemporary father had spoken to Orthodox North Americans three decades ago, calling all of us to live the authentic *Orthodoxy of the heart* about which he so often wrote.

The day was a comfortably cool one for California in the summertime, and the hills around Platina suffered from their usual dryness: a forest fire warning had been issued, and buckets of water stood ready, in case any wind caught a stray spark. We served the Divine Liturgy with only one lit candle, on the altar table formed by Father Seraphim's grave.

In many ways, this anniversary was an analogy of the life of this holy man, who withdrew from the spiritual wastelands of North American life, and retreated into the hills of northern



California, to live the monastic life, in the struggle to save his own soul, and in so doing, to offer the gift of salvation to others. He was like many of his era - and many more today - who knew all too well the false promises of the academics and social causes of his time. One of the things which made Father Seraphim unique was not his experiences, which many share, but rather his determination to respond to them in a way which was not of this world, but entirely of the Kingdom to Come - a life as Saint Nicolai Velimirovich describes as one in which everything that is of the flesh is transformed into that which is spiritual and holy.

It is this remarkable transformation of life, and the clarion call to others who would seek it, which drew hundreds of pilgrims to this remote

wilderness, both on this anniversary, and throughout the two and a half decades since Father Seraphim's repose. Many of those present came to know Father Seraphim during his life, as converts and clergy, as seekers and pilgrims, and even as orphans who had come half way around the world in the care of Father Seraphim's own spiritual father, Saint John Maximovich.

It was easy to understand the common spirit of those who had made the journey to mark the passing of this twenty-five years: converts who found the fullness of their spiritual hopes in Orthodox Christianity, those who have discovered the emptiness of academia and "social" Christianity, and a new generation of youth who reject the middle class comfort of the world of their parents' generation - youth whose lives and experiences reflect Father Seraphim's own.

For those who had ears to hear, Father Seraphim offered the mind of the Church Fathers, confronting the mind of the modern world. It is this Patristic voice which rejects the spirit of the times and its idolization of "progress", and offers instead the timeless Faith, above all passing fads and celebrity culture.

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Father Seraphim offered an authentic understanding of the unity of the Church, detailing authentic ecumenism as the proper relationship of Orthodox Christians among themselves *within* the Church, and meaningful evangelism to those *outside* it, with no confusion of the bounds of the historic Orthodox faith, however tempting it may be in order to fit in at heterodox events and institutions.

Father Seraphim's Orthodoxy was nothing more or less than that which he had inherited from the Tradition of the Church in all times and places: an ascetical, traditional Christianity, that was and still is a challenge to those who want to write their own tradition, and present it in an effort to fit the latest trend in society or religious circles. Father Seraphim would have none of

it - which is the very reason so many find his words so refreshing.

In the last three decades, Father Seraphim's writings on the patristic understanding of the soul after death have become something of a flashpoint in certain circles. Sadly, those who would still hammer away on this question really miss the essence of Father Seraphim's life and works. Father Seraphim demonstrates to us how little North American gamesmanship really matters in the whole scheme of things within the Church across time and place, and underscores his conclusion about modern Church life in North America today: we are really quite weird.

A quarter century since his repose, those who look to Father Seraphim as a modern Orthodox hero - and quite possibly a saint - are not those who have known comfort, but those who have known real pain of heart, who have struggled with both the passions and the painful questions of heart, which we all must bear in the Christian life. In some ways, perhaps Father Seraphim's words continue to be threatening to those who do not really want to go deeper into their own repentance, following the way of the Cross to enjoy the fruits of repentance.

Like the dry brush of the California hills in summer, it is these same kind of souls who seek Orthodox Christianity in its fullness who continue to draw near to the tiny light that Father Seraphim offered us, which points the way to the refreshing waters of Heaven. 

- Father Geoffrey Korz+

## **Urban & Orthodox: *Faith and the City***

*"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep."* - Romans 12:15

In the centuries leading up to the Reformation, only a handful of cities in Orthodox lands boasted a population in excess of ten thousand people. Even Constantinople, the Great City, enjoyed a population that was smaller than any major North American metropolis. Orthodox life was often synonymous with what we would today call village life, and it was village life which shaped the practice of the faith.

On a practical level, village life shaped the life of



Orthodox Christians in many ways. Since a church was within walking distance of home, repeated trips to the church many times a week or even every day, were not uncommon. Churches were left unlocked, not simply because the world was less prone to crime (there were many robberies of churches), but because individuals would beat a regular path to the doors of the church, entering for services, or simply to light a candle on the way to or from work. In short, the churches were rarely empty, and services were a full time job for the main parish priest.

Feast day processions regularly wound through village streets, where many locals either attended the services, or at least stopped work and went outside to greet the procession, men removing their hats, and all faithful reverently making the Sign of the Cross. Faithful friends were only a few doors away, if not next door, and neighbours - whether friend or enemy - were neighbours for life. Fasting was an accepted social norm; it is said that it was virtually impossible to purchase meat on the streets of Moscow during Great Lent.

The world has changed radically over the last millennium, demographically speaking. The sprawl of new cities has in many places destroyed the intimacy of the village. For the most part, churches are kept locked. The busy world of money making does not break its stride for feast days, and only occasionally for weekends and “holidays”. Friendships and parish relationships, are all too

frequently subject to the same fate as brand loyalty in merchandise: good while you’ve got it, but not something that’s a lifetime commitment. Religious processions are viewed as obscure by many people in our cities, replaced by Santa Claus and other kinds of parades.

We must ask ourselves, how is it possible in an increasingly urban environment to live out the life of Orthodox Christians, individually, and especially, in a community? The community question is key, since the Holy Mysteries cannot be undertaken alone, and the most central Mystery of Holy Communion, can only take place in an assembly of faithful with a priest.

Many Orthodox parishes have tried to address the geographic separation of the faithful using electronic communication, email lists, blogs, and online community chats. While these means of communication can be helpful, the human aspect of in-person contact is easily lost; it is almost impossible through email or text messaging for a brother or sister in Christ, much less a priest, to share the fullness of laughter and tears with their brethren. Additionally, electronic communication sets aside many of the limitations and nuances of personal communication, and leaves faithful open to the ever-present reality of Internet addiction. (Those who argue against the pervasiveness of such a problem either have not read the Church Fathers speaking on the human heart, do not deal pastorally with people,



or have never seen the Internet). In city life, electronic communications provide a means of sharing information, but never a means of sharing the intimacy of a Christian community. If this kind of rapport is seen by some as a new kind of Church community, it is fundamentally a false one.

Long distance telephone plans provide a more effective way of rebuilding the Orthodox village in the city. Such means of communication allow for the nuance of the human voice, and the subtleties of communicating deeper personal experiences, feelings, and even sins, normally without concerns for such exchanges being permanently electronically recorded. Yet even here, the sheer availability of the means of communication that should make our big cities smaller are in fact making our cities *nosier*.

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***Loud and busy cities are a threat to our interior life.***

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And here we have a fundamental problem for the authentic Orthodox life: village life did not simply differ from city life in terms of numbers, but in terms of pace and quietude. Our cities pose a serious threat to life as Orthodox Christians, not because of high crime rates, drug sales, or cultural diversity but because loud and busy cities are a threat to our *interior* life. Those who live in large, busy cities, cannot hope to live out an authentic Orthodox Christian life without recourse to the regular routine of *hesychia* - inner stillness - which prepares each faithful person for life in the unnatural urban wilderness. A twice or thrice daily prayer rule is not simply about "fitting in the prayers" - its mostly about withdrawing from daily routines which destroy us, inch by inch, in order that we may return to the

God Who restores us. Praying before the beginning of work in our cubicle at our job site is not simply about marking out our territory: it is about holding onto a very frail thread which anchors us to eternity, in the midst of corporate oblivion. Regular trips to monasteries or visits to our confessor are not "retreats" in the western, touristy sense: they are about addressing the inner noise of the human heart put into place by the outer noise of life in the big city.

Of course, all this takes time - not just time to develop, but a willingness to give up other things in order to pray many times each day, to attend to holy living, to be present for church services on week days as well as weekends, and to take time away in order to fulfil spiritual needs. This may involve sidetracking from beachfront holidays to attend church. It may involve asking your employer for a time or place to hang up an icon or to say prayers. It will certainly mean taking time away from activities - both domestic and at work - to observe *at church* feast days and prayers for the souls of the dead.

Several years ago, someone we know told us a story about some Muslim women in a nearby Walmart, who at the appointed time for Islamic prostrations toward Mecca, fell to the ground in the ladieswear section, and began to recite their chants. They were oblivious to the stunned middle-class white spectators ogling them from nearby aisles, as the confused store employees wondered what they should do.

Let us ask ourselves: are willing to withdraw several times each day from the noise of city life, in order to prepare ourselves for life in the city? Are we willing to consider moving to a village of Orthodox people, or - better still - to forming such a community? Are we willing to put our pride on the line to ask our employers for time and space for our Faith? Are we willing to take time away from work or home to cultivate real and lasting friendships with Orthodox brothers and sisters, not to mention with our confessor?

Without walling off in our cities space for our Faith - both physical space and space in time in daily life - the roar of the city will engulf, not Orthodoxy, but us as Orthodox Christians. The Tsars of Serbia and Russia, knowing the very fabric of their empires depended upon their intercessions before God, stopped imperial business in order to drop to their knees to pray in cities that were much more

Maple syrup for the soul.

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supportive of Orthodox life than our big cities today. Without asserting our Faith in the time and space of big city life, we will be washed away, drowned out - hour by deafening hour. It does not necessarily take the construction of an Orthodox chapel beside the mosque in Walmart. What it does take is an unqualified commitment to transforming life in the big city into life in the Kingdom of God - starting with the transformation of our own heart.



- Father Geoffrey Korz+

## Faith of Our Fathers:

### *My Grandad was no Environmentalist*

I would snicker as a child when my grandfather would reuse envelopes. Coming across some dry wit or ancestral connection in a country newspaper, Grandad would clip the article, and fix it securely with a note inside a recycled brown bank mailer, stuck fast with a yellowed piece of scotch tape.

Postal machines would no doubt have hated my grandfather for his inefficient method of mailing, but I'm not sure he ever met a postal machine. He stopped at the village post office, bought his stamps, and had every new letter hand cancelled on the spot. The machines may not have been his friends, but everyone at the post office knew him by name.

As a farmer, and the son of a UFO supporter (the United Farmers of Ontario - the political voice of rural people during the Depression), Grandad was more comfortable on a tractor than in a car, and much more comfortable in a peach field than in front of the television. He laughed at the idea that people started work at nine in the morning - the day is half gone, he would say. He was in bed soon after sundown every night. (Imagine the impact on energy consumption if all the lights went off at 9pm today).

One could even tell from a mile away his nighttime routine: two lights on in the dark farmhouse meant he was sitting in his chair in the living room, reading something like the *Farmer's Almanac*, the *Saint Catherine's Standard*, or *This England*; one light on meant he was in his room, saying his prayers. No

lights on meant the day was done: don't call him, because he often wouldn't pick up the phone. That was daytime business: there's no sense burning a light at night for that.

Grandad drove the same car for twenty years. It was always clean and ready for church on Sunday morning, so he could arrive early to ring the bell - a hand-rung bell on an old rope pulley. When the car became too old for regular use, he either turned it over for farm use, or passed it on to someone who needed it.

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### ***Grandad was more comfortable on a tractor than in a car, and in a peach field than in front of the television.***

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For my Grandad, six days each week meant work. Although he had only an hour or two each day of recreational time, he was well-read in current events, politics, and spiritual and religious matters, which he discussed at family meals three times each day. He did not work on Sundays, unless there was some emergency, which only happened once in a blue moon, not every week. The word "emergency" and "crisis" actually meant something to my grandfather.

Grandad did not ever use the word *recycle*: he just did it. To him a *footprint* was something you made with your boot in the mud, while you worked outside the barn. *Global warming* was something that happened in the summertime, and which called for longer afternoon breaks and lemonade for guests. *Pollution* was something an irresponsible young man did to himself with a bottle of scotch, and *green* was the colour of his overalls, not his politics or his spirituality. He didn't buy local goods because the planet needed him to do so: he just liked his neighbours, and they liked him.

Today as we read about Orthodox faithful and hierarchs trying to share the environmental "side" of Orthodox Christianity, I am often reminded of my grandfather. Although he was not an Orthodox Christian, his views on environmentalism were more Orthodox than many contemporary writers in the Church. Like the Church Fathers, he would have seen our environmental crisis as a logical consequence of

the fall, not the mechanism for the Apocalypse. He would have told us city folks to simplify our lives, to stop listening to fancy writers who go on lecture tours, to live quietly, to say our prayers, and to never draw attention to ourselves. He would have shaken his head over church leaders jumping on the environmental bandwagon.

I remember a time (I think I was about nine years old) when Grandad wrote away to a mail order company who sold something they called *fruit leather* (what later came to be known as a *fruit roll-up*, after they added all the sugar). I think he hated the idea of handing his grandchildren loads of candy. He didn't do any of this as a political statement, or an attempt to become part of a social movement: he was simply a traditional man, who rejected the modern pace of life, atheistic consumerism, and the mind of the modern world.

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### ***Good things are all inherited.***

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As I sit in his chair writing this, I am reminded of the lesson he taught us by example: that good things, whether furniture or faith or the way one lives, are all inherited. They are not made, or bought, or thought up by clever folks in lecture halls or newsrooms or advertising agencies or even so-called "progressive" monasteries. They are our link with the inheritance of the past, the experience of the generations of holy people gone before us, who lived faithful lives in unseen places, never knowing about press releases, or websites, or stress leave, because the anonymous life needs none of this.

When as Orthodox Christians we consider how we must live, it is this inheritance, this example in the smallest things, that we try to emulate: the example of holy forefathers, not an adaptation of worldly "trends" in order to somehow make them resemble the Church.

This is the faith of the apostles. This is the faith of the fathers. This is the faith that has enlightened the universe.

- *Father Geoffrey Korz+*



## **No Silence in Heaven: *Remembering Remembrance Day***



*"Be ye doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."*

- James 1:22

If Hallowe'en is the fastest emerging Canadian celebration (to the chagrin of many), Remembrance Day is undoubtedly the fastest vanishing one. One need not consider the declining number of veterans at the local cenotaph each November 11th: one need only consider the declining crowds, largely bereft of youth, those who are there representative of only a segment of Canada's increasingly culturally complex population.

In public schools, the context of Remembrance Day has often been distorted: a generation of staff and students who do not carry memories of a world war too easily place Remembrance Day into the context of contemporary international politics. The poppy is replaced by pleas for world peace, or the withdrawal of troops from Iraq.

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### ***Remembrance is a fragile thing, which requires the care of each generation.***

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Yet it is more than the poppy that is lost. The essence of the poppy - the essence of *remembrance* - is a fragile thing, which requires the care of each generation. Father Alexander Schmemman spoke of Orthodox Christianity being fundamentally an act of remembrance, of keeping faith with the generations before us in their witness to the saving Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Yet remembrance can be distorted into the darker tools of ethnic nationalism or opposition to the politics of other countries.


Such distortions can be mistaken for Orthodox Christianity, but in fact, they are frauds. While the whole liturgical life of the Church is a remembrance, perhaps the most obvious remembrance we observe is the commemoration of the dead, praying for the salvation of the souls of those who are reposed. This is an act of love, an act of remembrance.

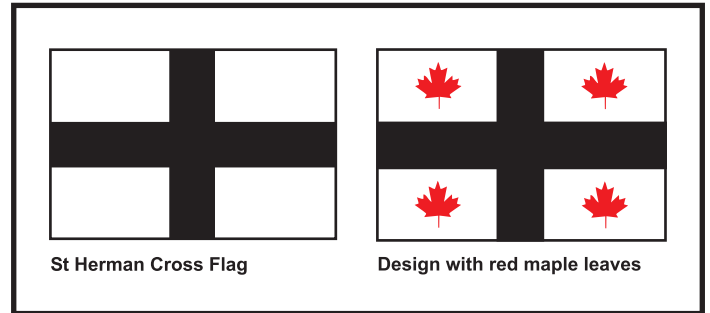
One wonders how much of this remembrance remains in Remembrance Day. Traditional Remembrance Day memorials, with their roots in masonic ceremonies, mark the remembrance of fallen soldiers not with prayer for the souls, but with silence. Memories are reduced to the impressions that are left with the living, not the eternal memory of the reposed who stand before God. Like the poppies on the graves of fallen soldiers, such memories fade with the generations, and the day on which they are remembered fades as well.

Yet in Orthodox parishes across Canada, this memory is lost as well. In every priests service book there appears a Service of Prayer for Departed Soldiers - a service which is almost never used today. It is not as if those in Orthodox parishes in Canada have no memory of those who have died in war: ask any old Ukrainian, or Greek patriot, or Serbian nationalist, or convert of British descent about the stories they heard at their grandfather's knee (from an age when people took the time to listen). Greek faithful even set aside a day each October to remember such courage. Pious Serbians offer prayers for slain soldiers and faithful in their own holy region of Kosovo. Yet in Canada, where a generation of young people learn most of what they know about Remembrance Day from the public schools, most Orthodox parishes are silent, at the very time we should be bearing witness by praying for the eternal memory of fallen Orthodox soldiers, our response is too often the same as the masonic cenotaph rituals: silence.

The last generation that remembers the world at war is now passing away: the faces in our parishes and at our cenotaphs tell the tale. Yet for Orthodox Christians, the true practice of remembering the souls of the departed, is one of eternal memory, passed on from one generation to the next, and eternal in the Presence of God. When the practice of such a memorial for soldiers is missed in Orthodox parishes, we have truly become like the world.

In a decade or two, it may be that military bands and civil officials will cease to remember those souls departed in various wars. Our public schools have for the most part already forgotten. But Orthodox Christians, who wear the poppy or not, who carry living memories of fallen loved ones or not, will be able to answer with fullness of heart and voice: *We will remember.*

– Father Geoffrey Korz+ 



## Raise the Flag

*“In the name of our God we will set up our banners”*  
- Psalm 20:5 (19:5)

Someone once said that Canadian nationalism is all about flags and tunes. What is certainly true is the Canadian love for flags. The unfolding of this nation is a veritable vexillological paradise, which has held very much to the inheritance of its past, and the testimony of the wonders of God to be found in its landscape.

The use of flags in the contemporary sense has been deeply influenced by Christian culture: in no fewer than half of the flags around the world can one find explicit or implicit witness to Christ and His saints. In the class of flags that bear the cross, one also discovers a beautiful dual witness to Christ *in His saints*: the Orthodox concept that Christ's grace is made manifest in the lives of holy people, who stand as witnesses inside time to our God Who entered into human history for our salvation. Flags of Orthodox nations such as Greece and Georgia bear the cross attributed to their respective patrons. The diverse nations of Scandinavia bear the horizontal cross attributed to Saint Ansgar, the enlightener of their lands.

By virtue of our nation's early history, Canada's flags abound with the hallmark crosses of at least two saints: Saints George and Andrew, whose red/white and white/blue crosses respectively grace no fewer than seven provincial and territorial flags. Even the maple leaf flag, adopted to replace the Red Ensign which bore the cross of St. George, bears witness to its Christian roots. Each red field reflects the oceans that frame our nation, “from sea to sea” (Psalm 72[71]:8), as the Canadian national motto describes



it. The maple leaf, drawn from the nation's landscape, reflects the fruit of the Tree of the Cross: the crimson of Christ's blood, and the victory of our salvation. Even the colours of the flag - thought by many to simply be a convenient match for Prime Minister Pearson's Liberal party colours - draw on a Christian root: the red and white of the cross of St. George, Canada's patron.

Canada follows in a glorious tradition of raising national banners to honour Christ and His saints, albeit often unknowingly. Yet the Church here, often mired in nostalgia for far away homelands, has been slow to follow in the tradition of raising a distinct flag to a local patron saint. In the same spirit that inspired the Orthodox of Muscovy, the Greek armed forces, the Orthodox Celts and countless other faithful to construct a banner for their local Church, perhaps the time has come for an Orthodox flag for Canada: Saint Herman's Cross.

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### *Our flags abound with symbols of saints.*

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The first glorified saint of North America, Saint Herman was both an evangelist and an ascetic, bearing the weight of a heavy iron cross throughout his life in the snow-covered North American north. Thus, the bold, black cross on a white field provides for us the Cross of Saint Herman. Such a cross is significant for Canadians in particular, since it is the centre piece for the flag of Vinland, the banner used to rally those who love the memory of the first Viking settlement in North America, somewhere along the coast of Canada, likely in Newfoundland. How fitting to remember those first few Orthodox faithful among the Vikings who visited our land, centuries before Canada was known as a country.

Those in the Church who are serious about the continuity of Orthodox witness to the people of our home and native land would be well served by such an emblem, which follows in the tradition of our national symbols, as well as the Orthodox inheritance of those who have settled here, both in recent and past centuries. May the Lord bless such an initiative, and stir our hierarch to take up such a banner on the field of spiritual battle in which we live.

- Father Geoffrey Korz+



## Always, Everywhere, and by All: *Giving the Ancestors A Vote*

*"Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of classes - our Ancestors."* - G. K. Chesterton



The 1980s saw the rise of religious groups often described as "conservative" – conservative evangelicals, conservative Catholics, and others dedicated to "conservative" causes.

It is sometimes tempting to view the Orthodox Church as "conservative" as well. As a religious group which holds many common moral positions with conservative groups, Orthodox Christianity inevitably attracts this sort of categorization. Add to this the spiritual interest of conservative-minded Protestants and Roman Catholics, groups often mired in concerns over the moral flux of their own spiritual homes, and the Orthodox Church looks more than conservative: it can even appear to be the Archconservative oasis.

About a decade ago, a very solid Orthodox priest shocked me with the pronouncement: the Orthodox Church is not conservative! How could this be true, I asked? Orthodoxy dedicates so much to preserving the inheritance of the past, the wisdom of the ages - all that is good and true, in the face of the confusion of modernity. Surely, Orthodoxy is the natural spiritual home to religious conservatives?

The priest explained himself. To be conservative, he argued, was to be a defender of the *status quo*, the way things are, whatever that may be. Regardless of the experience of others cultures and other times, the conservative resists changes at all costs, regardless of the merits of the change. The concept of change is *de facto* a negative: conservatism is simply the flip side of the revolutionary view, that argues that change is *de facto* a positive.

For the Orthodox Christian, neither approach is true. While Orthodoxy has far less in common with the revolutionary view, Orthodoxy is not conservative at heart, but rather traditional. The differences are fundamental.

In many ways, Holy Tradition has a more conservative character, since it rejects the idea that



revolutionary change can accomplish anything that is spiritually helpful. It also trusts the inherited wisdom of the past - the collected wisdom of the Church through the centuries.

Yet Orthodox Tradition (often called Holy Tradition) takes a different approach. Since Holy Tradition incorporates the entire, collected experience of all holy people from all times and places, it is above the chauvinism of conservatism, rejecting the idea that the spiritual life of one time or place - Byzantium, Imperial Russia, modern North America, or even the age of the Apostles - contains the unique expression of the Truth to the exclusion of all others. Since Holy Tradition seeks the witness of the Holy Spirit in the Church through the filter of the lives not of a few well-known or clever saints, but of *all the saints*, it avoids the pitfalls of individualism, whether from conservatives or liberals. It is not enough to have heroes, even holy ones,

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***Saint Vincent of Lerins tells us that the faith of the universal Church is that which was believed everywhere, always, and by all.***

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since even the saints have certain errors and excesses in their own individual character. We see this in the examples of saints like Augustine of Hippo, whose writings on repentance are full of Orthodox witness, but whose words on the question of original sin sometimes present a distorted picture of Orthodox Truth. The witness of the *whole Orthodox Church, throughout the ages*, provides the lens for the Truth of Christ.

The traditionalist Roman Catholic author G. K. Chesterton wrote about giving the ancestors a “vote”, as it were, on the way in which the world should progress; in doing so, we can see just how irrelevant are passing modern trends. The Church triumphant - the company of the departed saints - will always outnumber the Church militant, with only a tiny crumb representing us Orthodox in North America.

Saint Vincent of Lerins, one of the esteemed Fathers of the Orthodox West, is often quoted for his famous words: the catholic (universal) faith is that which was believed everywhere, always, and by all. As Orthodox living in the twenty-first century let us heed the words of this holy one, recognizing that our Faith is not a

museum piece from a sacred time for us to preserve in suspended animation, but rather a witness to the Eternal Truth of Christ, Who can be found, unchanging and unchanged, in all times, places, cultures, and situations.



- Father Geoffrey Korz+

## **The Mother of Relativism: *Elizabeth I and the Shaping of the Canadian Mind***

*The devil said unto Him, “All these things will I give Thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.”*

- Matthew 4:9



It may seem a stretch to suggest that the monarch of a distant land five centuries ago could impact the daily thinking of modern Canadians. For those who know the life and faith of Elizabeth I and the spiritual revolution she brought on England, the connection begins to become clear, however – a connection that reaches into modern debates over Canadian law, morality, and the very question of Truth.

It is popular to think of Henry VIII as the father of the Reformation in England. Perhaps his popularity has something to do with the steamy story of his many wives and their untimely and violent deaths by execution: his story simply makes good historical theatre. But for those who really want to gain an insight into the spiritual mind of Canada as a nation, one must look to Henry’s daughter, Elizabeth I.

Born to a commoner mother made queen by her father after what is perhaps the most famous divorce in modern history, Elizabeth faced exile, imprisonment, and finally royal enthronement in some of the most turbulent first years of conflict between Protestants and Roman Catholics in England. For her part, Elizabeth was her father’s daughter: a Protestant who hated the papacy and its political allies, who defended with her every resource the autonomy of her nation against Catholic interference. Yet Elizabeth was something of a spiritual conundrum, a strange sort of Protestant who said the rosary daily, and issued a royal decree that all

English churches have candles, kneelers, and a crucifix - some stunningly Catholic trapping for a Protestant queen. At the same time, Elizabeth was a vigorous iconoclast, who ordered the destruction or painting over of every religious statue or icon in her realm, a move which pleased greatly her Protestant allies.

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***Elizabeth I considered religion and personal “truth” an entirely private matter - much like most Canadians do today.***

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The reign of Elizabeth is often summed up in her famous declaration that she would not inquire into the hearts and minds of men regarding private faith: her singular goal as queen was to ensure the loyalty of all her subjects to her; religion and personal “truth” she considered an entirely private matter.

This is where Elizabeth proved an innovator, and the first major sovereign to adopt not simply a policy of religious tolerance, but religious *relativism* as her state standard. Alone or with help, she created new sphere of public activity: the secular public square, in which claims of faith and truth have no role, other than to serve as means of division in a nation which might otherwise enjoy harmony. The rule was simple: believe what you like, but be loyal to the crown, and make no public claims to having the fullness of Truth.

It is this mind, given birth by Elizabeth, that was exported to England’s colonies, most notably Canada, which experienced the same Protestant-Catholic divide, and which over time, adopted the same religious relativism as its *de facto* state policy. The same relativism offers us in Canada today whatever we may ask - bigger houses, cars, shopping malls, and a thriving economy - as long as we are willing to silence religious voices, and keep such views out of public

debates and the halls of our legislatures.

Most Canadians have willingly obliged to sign on to this now All-Canadian program, which Elizabeth envisioned. From debates over marriage to abortion to religious schools, a significant Canadian voice continues to call for silence from religious voices and church leaders, unless such voices echo what secular politicians are already saying. It is publically acceptable for a religious leader to argue for or against work for welfare, as long as one does not believe God told you to do so.

Relativism is at the heart of the official policy of multiculturalism, and the religious roundtables offered up in its name. All groups are invited to have “a voice”, but only if they are willing to give up claims to the Truth, and if they are willing to acknowledge the legitimate “voice” of others. This is the basis for the modern ecumenical movement, as well as the Protestant missionary mind\*.

One major problem is the fact that most Orthodox Christians in Canada have become the spiritual

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***Most Orthodox Christians in Canada have become the spiritual children of Elizabeth I, and have bought into relativism.***

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children of Elizabeth I, and have bought into relativism, and (as Richard Neuhaus calls it) the “naked public square”, devoid of anything in the way of Divine Revelation or guidance, or even debate. We can no longer assume (as if we ever could) that politicians, social elites, and religious leaders who claim to represent the Orthodox voice are not actually articulating the relativism of Elizabethan England, with all the falsehood and emptiness it brings.

Canada has elaborated on the relativism of Elizabeth I, with the addition of our particular brand of multiculturalism. For Orthodox communities, this has fostered the heresy of *phyletism* – the teaching that the Orthodox faith is uniquely and most perfectly articulated through one culture and by one people. While this heresy (which was condemned by a council of the Church in Russia) was perhaps more virulent in past decades, it is still alive and well in scores of parishes, and simmers within the heart of too many parish members, both those born into the Church and

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those who joined Her in adulthood and who are now tempted to try to “fix” Her.

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***The bigotry of phyletism and the relativism of Elizabeth I work in symphony, allowing Canadians to maintain their private bigotries and self-congratulations, while remaining publically friendly and diplomatic.***

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Ironically, the bigotry of phyletism and the relativism of Elizabeth I work in symphony, as opposite sides of the same coin, allowing Canadians to maintain their private bigotries and self-congratulations, while remaining publically friendly and diplomatic. Phyletism allows one to speak falsely of Orthodoxy as the “religion of Greeks and Russians” and of Anglicanism, Buddhism, and Islam as the religions of Englishmen, Chinese, and Arabs, respectively. Relativism - the sister of phyletism - allows these groups to “work together” on religious questions where serious spiritual differences exist, setting aside the question of Truth in the spirit of Canadian agreeableness.

In the midst of such an environment, Orthodox Christians are also beset with the temptation to become walled off from public debate, and to become angry critics of those who have fallen into such errors. Yet we have the ideal and only Model of the path of true Orthodox witness, in the Person of Jesus Christ, Who, in response to the offers of the evil one in the wilderness retorted, “It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord Thy God... Alone”.

Whenever Elizabethan-inspired relativism presents itself in the spiritual wilderness of Canadian life, let us pray that we, too, will be granted the spiritual sight to reject the false gods of relativism and phyletism, that we may gain the Kingdom of the Eternal Monarch, with Whom there is no variance or turning.



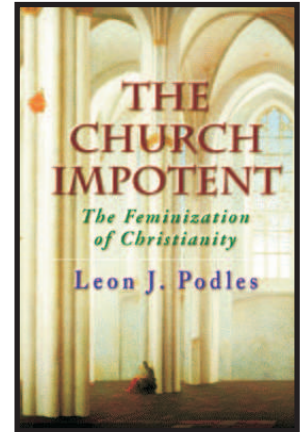
-Father Geoffrey Korz+

\* See the book *The Missionary Roots of Modern Ecumenism* by Father Peter Alban Heers.

## Religion for Girls

### **The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity**

by Leon J. Podles,  
Spence Publishing,  
288 pages, \$31.24 CDN  
ISBN-10: 1890626198.



In the age of political correctness, one has become accustomed to reading about gender issues, at all levels. From campaigns to increase the number of women in legislatures, to special science programs for girls, to treatises condemning the dominance of patriarchy in religion, revolutionary feminism has succeeded in capturing the North American mind. In the process, it has also captured the North American political, social, and religious reality, and affected major changes in the landscape in which we live.

Part of the success of radical feminism has been their reliance on the myth that men - aggressive, stupid, and backward-looking men - continue to dominate positions of power, shaping the mindset of the poor souls who suffer under their brutish care.

Enter author Leon Podles. Podles could be described as the “myth-buster” of North American religious life. Far from painting a picture favourable to the existence of a male religious “establishment”, Podles builds a convincing argument in support of a very different trend: the feminization of what sociologists call “Christianity” in North America. Starting with basic demographics, Podles underscores the decline of men in organized Christians groups across North America. In his chapter, *Armies of Women*, Podles offers a glimpse into the range of impact of this shift, from the most extreme among

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Pentacostal groups (almost 2:1 women to male), to the most moderate (slightly more than 1:1 women to male) among Roman Catholics. The shift in the number of seminarians show similar trends.

The patristic dictum, *lex orandi, lex credendi*, (the law of worship equals the law of belief) is reflected throughout this book, with an almost eerie consistency. In his chapter on *Feminized Christianity*, Podles examines the impact of the demographic makeup of Christian groups. He argues that the shift is fundamentally theological, a rejection of the inheritance of the traditional Judaeo-Christian understanding of God, replaced by a new (or at least different), highly romanticized and feelings-based approach to what is commonly seen as “Christian” life in North America. From the frills on the robes of androgynous high-church Episcopalians, to the warm-and-fuzzy Bible study, to the advent of Precious Moments dolls as a bizarre religious icon, Podles suggests that the contemporary mind views Christianity in a whole new light: it is a religion for girls, and men who act like girls.

Curiously sparse are references to the historic Orthodox Church, either in antiquity or in contemporary times. In the few references Podles

offers, he seems somewhat amazed that Orthodoxy does not conform to his thesis. Demographically, men outnumber women in Orthodox church life. The theological fluffiness that afflicts much of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism seems wholly absent from Orthodox circles. Even Podles’s remedy for the feminized Christianity of the modern West - inter-generational male bonding rites - seems alien to the Orthodox life, where the normal rigor of prayer and liturgical life (where it is observed), fulfils the emotional social and - dare one say it - spiritual needs of the faithful in a way in which feminized “Christianity” can never do.

*The Church Impotent* is a fascinating read for anyone interested in major trends within Christian groups in North America. The book reaches far deeper than most sociological analyses (the author is both an academic and a believer), looking behind various ideological trends to their social roots, and tracing the trajectory to its logical conclusion. For Orthodox Christians, *The Church Impotent* is a reminder of the reasons the Church Fathers took seriously the avoidance of passing fads and theological cream-puffery. Podles’s book serves as a call to all faithful to return to the bedrock of the historic Christian Church, as the only means of avoiding the contempt of society at large, and men in particular.

– Father Geoffrey Korz+



## Sonnet XVI.

My soul, O Lord, my soul doth weep for Thee,  
As doth the widow weep for him whose hand  
So lately lay upon her brow. I stand  
As lost as by her husband's grave doth she,  
Now knowing well that parted she must be  
From touch, from warmth, from all the things they  
planned  
To labour for: their children, house and land  
Which they did tend in love and charity.  
And yet, my Christ, 'tis Thee who truly live  
While I remain encumbered by the chains  
Of passions rooted deep within me. Come  
And labour with me, Lord, that I may give  
Myself to Thee as bride to Holy Bridegroom. Pains  
Will I endure if Thou wilt take me home!

– Sara Hillis



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